McNairy County Independent.

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James J. Hill, the Great North Western pioneer and railroad builder, died at his home in St. Paul, Minn., Monday. He was near his 90th near. His services in the great Northwest and his broad conception of big things, coupled with the ability to accomplish results, has been the wonder of men for many years.

Mr. E. L. Robinson, market agent of the M. & O., and Mr. Carlton Ball, dairy and poultry agent of the M. & O., both with headquarters at St. Louis, called on us a few days ago, and gave us an outline of what the M. & O. is putting up to the farmers. They propose to put an agent here and buy all the cream brought in and pay cash down for same, which they say would bring to the housewife the equal of 30c per pound for the butter made from same. Due notice will be given when they will visit all points with a dairying car, and show the details of the plan.

The Independent has just received a fresh batch of New York letter, which, if anything surpass in interest those heretofore enjoyed by our readers. One of the letters is a vivid description of the writer's visit to the New York Cotton Exchange, where the price of the staple is mainly fixed, and this shows how it is done. Such information as this, which no other correspondent but ours could have succeded in getting, perhaps, as he has peculiar facilities for getting on the inside nearly everywhere, is of real value to the people, and none can afford to miss it. Orders should be given in advance for copies, or, better still, every one interested (and who is not?) should subscribe. We also advise our readers to preserve these papers, as the articles therein are of permanent, historic interest, and will read as well next year as now. If possible, these letters will be kept up, even if the have to be shortened some, as the writer says he is pretty busy with his own work, but likes to talk to his old neigbors and kinfolks.

DISASTROUS FIRE

The Warren Hotel Reduced to Ashes. Narrow Escape of Inmates

The sleeping town was aroused Sunday morning about 3 o'clock, by the shooting of guns and the whistling of the electric light plant. Citizens rushed to their doors and windows, to see the curling smoke and darting flames near the depot, and soon on to the building affected.

The Warren hotel stood just east of the railroad, nearly opposite the depot, and was the terminus of the stately Court avenue with its broad expanse of shade trees. The building was erected by P. H. Thrasher in the early days of the town. It was an attractive two story frame, with porches and other features which made it an attractive building. In front of the south wing stood a stately willow oak and two large gum trees, affording a most delightful shade for the porches surrounding the building.

A few years ago the building became the property of J. T. Warren, president of the First National Bank. For a year his son-in-law, Mr. Bryant, and wife had conducted the hotel with marked success. Mr. Warren made his home there, and a number of regular boarders, including the editor of the Independent and wife, though they did not room there.

Before anyone could arrive, the whole south wing, with the kitchen and large dining room, was filled with smoke, and almost instantly burst into flames. Mr. V. H. Morris, of the Independent office, occupied a room over the dining room. The smoke awoke him and he barely escaped with his life down the stairway, losing all of his wearing apparel. Others, on the first floor, made their way out through smoke which seemed to fill every room. Only a very few articles of furniture were removed.

The house was newly and elegantly furnished. The furnishings were valued at between $2,500 and $3,000, with only $800 insurance. The building was worth at least $3,000, with $1,500 insurance.

The cause of the fire is a mystery, but is supposed to have been from a defective flue or fire from the range, which had smouldered for hours.

It is not probable that it will ever be rebuilt, as it is not the best location now for a hotel.

It was as airless a night as could be, yet the sparks on the roofs of Mr. Peery, Mr. Estes, Joe Gray, and the Gooch hotel fired the roofs, but were extinguished. The three trunks of beautiful shade trees stand as mute martyrs—saving the depot. It causes sadness to every one as they look down the street to see only the tall chimneys standing as reminders of many hallowed associations which during a generation clustered around the first good hotel ever built in Selmer.

NEW YORK LETTER

The year 1903 was one of the most interesting I have ever experienced, for it was then that as Special Pension Examiner I travelled over West Virginia and eastern Kentucky, meeting the mountaineers and seeing some of the roughest country in this nation.

The Tug River, a branch of the Big Sandy, is the dividing line between the two states for many miles, and its banks were the scene of bloody fights among the feud factions who did their murderous work there twenty or thirty years ago. Starting almost from nothing, these feuds raged between several factions, the most noted of which was the Hatfield-McCoy contingent. "Devil Anse" Hatfield headed the West Virginia clan, while "Ran" McCoy led the faction on the Kentucky side. There were perhaps fifty of each gang, and all went armed day and night; that is, they slept with their guns and knives, and were always ready for a fight to the death. At least half of them were killed before the feud died out. A McCoy gang met some Hatfields one day near the river bank, and laid them low; then other Hatfields crossed the river into Pike county, Kentucky, and "treed" their enemies in a log cabin near Blackberry branch of Pond creek. I saw the spot where it had stood. The beseiged McCoys shot out at their pursuers through the logs of the cabin, and got more than one victim, but the Hatfields crept up to the cabin and set it afire. Then one of the McCoy women went out with a pitcher of buttermilk and tried to put out the fire. She was shot dead by a Hatfield bullet, but just who fired it was never found out. That was the beginning of the end. The people on both sides so strongly condemned the shooting of a woman that the feud died out through public contempt. The cabin burned down; "Ran" McCoy and two of his sons tried to escape; the old man alone got away, but always carried deep scars from that conflict.

It was related that one day the Hatfields caught a bunch of the McCoys on the banks of the Tug and lined them up to be shot. One after the other of the victims was shot down in cold blood, till they came to a McCoy lad of fourteen, whom the Hatfields did not like to kill. They consulted their chief, "Devil Anse" about it. He looked at the boy, who stood there unflinchingly, thought a moment, and said: "Little snakes makes big snakes." Then, pointing to a big, smooth sycamore tree, that rose straight in the air forty feet to the first limb, and was at least two feet thick, he said to the boy: "Bud, if you can climb that tree, I'll spare your life." The boy saw it was impossible, and said so. In another minute he was gasping out his last breath on the grass by the river side. Cap Hatfield, the oldest son of Devil Anse, had, it was said, killed sixteen men, and he (Cap) had a son of fourteen years who had four notches on his rifle to his credit, each notch meaning a dead McCoy.

Riding along the Kentucky side of the Tug river one day, in a sort of open bottom, where there was a meadow of perhaps fifty acres surrounded by hills on all sides but the east, where the river was, I saw a big platform standing in the lonesome spot, and there was a cross-piece of heavy oak timber at the top—a gallows big enough to hang twenty men at one time. I heard afterward that that had been erected by the McCoys, for use in case the Hatfields could be caught. Devil Anse, who used to own valuable lands at that spot, could see it from the West Virginia side, but it was like the promised land just out of reach for him, "while Jordan rolled between."

Once I had a pension claim for one of the McCoy widows to look up, and Devil Anse had to be seen and his testimony taken, as he had been a witness to the wedding. I started on the trail at Logan courthouse, up Fountain creek, which I followed for fourteen miles before finding the noted feudist. As I rode up the creek, where numerous splash-dams had been constructed to aid in rafting the timber down out of the hills, I inquired at frequent intervals as to how far it was to the house of Devil Anse Hatfield. Everybody would then ask me who I was, and what was my business. Finally, a big white house, the finest in all that region, nearly at the head of the creek, was reached, and I went in. A kind-faced old lady, who said she was Mrs. Hatfield, invited me in to the fire, as it was in the late fall, and said Anse was out hunting the in mountains but would be in soon. I sat down by the fire, and a young couple, just married (the youngest daughter of Devil Anse and her young mountaineer husband) were spooning, and kept on with their lovemaking, just as though nobody were present. Around the wall were numerous photographs of Devil Anse, showing him with a rifle in each hand, pistols peeping from each pocket, and a big bowie knife in his teeth and a butcher knife at his belt. "I'm sorter ashamed of Anse, the way they've got him pictured there," the old lady said; "the picture man said the pictures would sell that-a-way, and he has sold several of them at a quarter apiece." I promptly bought one at the price. Soon I saw a stoop-shouldered old man coming down the mountain side with light step, and Devil Anse was introduced to me. Another mountaineer suddenly appeared in the hall and motioned him to one side. He was armed, and looked at me suspiciously, but a whispered word from the old feudist sent him away satisfied. He was there to protect Hatfield, I suppose.

I looked at the noted West Virginia feudist with much interest. Sixty-five years old, eyes keen and bright, beard and hair, both long and flowing, without a silver thread! And handsome! I was much struck by the strong resemblance between him and the pictures of the poet Tennyson, and told him so. He had never heard of Tennyson, but I told him the man was one of the greatest of writers. We soon sat down to a regular mountain dinner, in which boiled pig backbones and ribs played a large part. Anse bent over his plate, with a big piece of meat in his hands, and removed the flesh with a great deal of speed and no little noise, utterly disdaining the knife and fork laid at his plate. meanwhile, he talked, without any prompting from me, of the great feud in which he had taken such a leading part. "Hit started, as you might say, from jist nothin'; a little ole shoat, not worth over two dollars, was stole by sombody; then somebody had sombody arrested about it; then that fellow that had him arrested was shot, and so hit went; first one side and then the other lost a man. Hit weren't intended that a woman should be killed, and hit weren't done by my orders. I reckin that broke hit up, and hit was about time, too, I reckin." He spoke with his eyes shut tightly, and it looked as though remorse was gnawing him and that he was all the harder gnawing at the pig bone.

There will not be room to repeat much of what he said, although it was all interesting, but what attracted me most was his remarks about hunting bears. Devil Anse was known to have tracked bears for more than thirty miles over the rocky hills without a dog. I asked him how he could do it. Then he made a remark showing his deep insight into nature. "Well, you see, bears is like men; they won't generally climb over a hill when they can find a low gap. I knowed the ground the bear would walk over—the easiest he could find, and that is the way I run him down." He said that one day some boys tried to fool him by taking a dead coon's feet and making tracks in the mud by a creek. He did not like the looks of the tracks, some way, and tried his dog on them. When he saw that the dog paid no attention to the tracks, he knew it was a trick. One of his nephews murdered a Syrian peddler, and was foolish enough to parade around in clothes taken from the dead man's pack. Devil Anse trailed the boy from Logan court house to Dolorme station on the Tug river, 35 miles, but the boy escaped into Kentucky, and Devil Anse knew it was as much as his own life was worth to go over there, so he trailed the fellow no further, but the boy was afterwards caught. In parting, Devil Anse told me that he was very sorry for the feud, and if he could see the head of the McCoy faction, he would be glad to shake hands and call it square. I saw old Ran McCoy a week or two later, and delivered the message of Devil Anse to him. The old man fixed his one fiery eye on me, and slowly said: "If Devil Anse wants to settle up, let him come over here and show himself to the courts. When they get through with him, if there is anything left of him, we can talk about a compromise." It was like Artemus Ward, the famous humorist, said about an Indian he met once. The Indian said in parting: "Me heap glad to meet you. Me see you agin on the happy hunting grounds. Artemus said: "If we do, there'll be a fight."

At Williamson, Mingo county, West Virginia, a little town on the Tug river, there were a number of saloons, and slot machines for gambling. Since then whisky has been abolished from the state, and the town has grown wonderfully. I stayed one night with a family across the river in Kentucky, where there was a pretty girl named Ida. That was in Pike county. I wrote a piece of impromptu verse for her, which I afterwards heard people repeating in the county—very poor stuff it was, as you will see:

A Pike county maiden named Ida
Had a beau who was fond of hard cider;
Of the cider he smelt
Till quite tipsy she felt
Whenever he sat down beside her.

This maid of Pike county, Kentucky,
Considered that life would be lucky
In a cabin so snug
Just over the Tug,
For he called her his darling, his ducky.

Said he: Come list to my lingo,
Let us fly to the mountains of Mingo;
You shall sing and shall play,
And shall dance all the day,
And never wash dishes, by Jingo!

They were married according to wishes,
And are living on taters and fishes;
They have nothing to carve
And are likely to starve,
And that's why she doesn't wash dishes.

In conclusion, it is proper to say that never, in all my travels, was I ever better treated than I was by these mountaineers. One night I got off at Vivian station, on the Norfolk & Western; it was midnight; I knew of no place to sleep. A portly gentleman came up to me, learned who I was, and told me to follow him. For half a mile we walked over the rocks, lighted by a lantern, till we reached a miner's cabin, where I got a bed for the rest of the night. The gentleman who went out of his way to help me, was Dr. Hatfield, a nephew of the redoubtable Devil Anse, and now governor of West Virginia. He was the most noted surgeon in that country, and a man of high intelligence, although neither his father nor his uncle could read or write.

LINDSAY S. PERKINS.

(*Written for the Independent*)

The McNairy Pioneers

Yes, I've seen the Beaty pictures of McNairy's pioneers,
And they bring back memories to me; tender thoughts too deep for tears;
Memories of the good old neighbors gone to their eternal home,
While upon this troubled planet still a stranger I must roam.

Memories of the town of Purdy, which unto my childish eyes
Seemed a city full of castles towering upward to the skies;
Thoughts of summer time and mother, in the woods of Tennessee,
And the days of happy childhood that shall not return to me.

See Tab Shull in shirt sleeves sitting in the court-house evening shade,
Hear him, round red face all smiling, telling of Bob Damron's raid;
Everybody knew and liked him, but his friends, like him, are gone,
Where we too erelong shall follow disappearing one by one.

See our good friend, Dr. Kindle, with his drug case black and grim,
Hurrying where some patient sufferer waitied anxiously for him.
Long since, with the Good Physician our kind doctor went to stay,
But we whom he knew as children, name him lovingly to-day.

See the sheriff, tall Bill Jopling, biting at his fragrant plug;
Ah, when Bill was there, old Purdy was no place for thief or thug!
Hear the lawyers and the judges try some long-forgotten case—
Of that cosy little court-house not one stone is now in place.

See the busy, cheerful women gather for a quilting-bee,
While the men are out log-rolling—how it all comes back to me—
How they cooked that glorious dinner, and how everyone did eat,
Pies and dumpling, biscuit, cornbread, custard, seven kinds of meat!

When you talk of old McNairy and its folks of other years,
Don't forget the wives and mothers—noble women pioneers!
All are men in Beaty's pictures, but the women did their share:
Bore the children, cooked the victuals, kept the house with tender care.

Carded wool and cotton; spun them; wove them on a hand-made loom;
Sewed the garments, sheets and bed-quilts, carpeted the living room,
And with bark of wild white walnut dyed that wool and cotton yarn;
Made their soap, with lye in kettles from the hoppers by the barn.

Visited a sorrowing neighbor, helped her with her work, and then
Tended their own crying babies, fed their tired and hungry men;
Walked the path of peace and virtue that their good ancestors trod;
Prayed, and strove to keep their children in the path that leads to God.

Fortune has not smiled upon me; of no riches I can boast,
But that people's blood is in me; and I drink a temperance toast
To the memory of Old Purdy—may it shine across the years—
And I'm proud that I descended from McNairy's Pioneers.

SIGMA,

Nirgends, May 8, 1916.